

What the Heart Produces

Luke 6:43-45

READ TEXT

A Kingdom Picture: Trees and Fruit (vv. 43–44)

Jesus begins with a picture that makes immediate sense to us.

“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit.”

Fruit reveals character. That’s what Jesus is saying. Not perfection—but nature. Over time, what a tree *is* becomes visible in what it produces. And that means Jesus is deeply concerned with what His followers are becoming, not just what they are doing.

Fruit is not manufactured; it is produced. You don’t staple oranges onto an apple tree and call it growth. You might fool someone from a distance, but eventually the truth shows. **Fruit reveals the nature of the tree, not momentary effort.**

And that tells us something crucial about the kingdom of God.

Throughout the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus keeps moving deeper. He begins with enemies, moves to mercy, then to humility—and now He presses into formation. The kingdom is not about managing appearances or modifying behavior. God’s kingdom is about new creation.

We often want the kingdom to work from the outside in: *Tell me what to do. Give me the rules. Fix my habits.* But Jesus insists the kingdom works from the inside out.

You can polish apples to make them look good in a bowl. You can shine them up, arrange them just right, and everything looks healthy. But if the apple is rotten on the inside, it doesn’t matter how good it looks—when you bite in, the truth is revealed.

The kingdom produces a certain kind of person. And over time—slowly, faithfully—our lives will bear fruit that matches what is growing beneath the surface.

And here’s where Jesus sharpens the point.

If the *products* of my life are the litmus test of my heart, then **what I say is the litmus test of my soul.**

That's why this teaching connects so clearly with James 3, where the tongue is described as small but powerful, capable of blessing and cursing, revealing what is really going on within us. Jesus highlights speech because it exposes formation faster than almost anything else.

This is an ethical priority for Jesus. We are what we produce—*produce* in every sense of the word. What we create, what we present, what we offer to the world. And nowhere is that more obvious than in **what we say and how we say it.**

Because character is often revealed less by vocabulary and more by tone. Not just *what* we say—but *how* we say it when we're tired, stressed, challenged, or disagreed with.

And yet, Jesus is not demanding perfection or polish.

I keep thinking about picking blackberries—how the sweetest fruit often comes from bushes full of thorns. They're not tame plants. You don't casually stroll up to them. You come away scratched and marked.

And yet—they produce good fruit.

Our lives may have rough edges. Weakness. Struggle. We may never be neat or polished or tame. But that does not excuse fruitlessness. The presence of thorns does not cancel the call to bear fruit.

Jesus isn't asking whether our lives are flawless. He's asking whether they are fruitful. Because fruit reveals the tree.

And if fruit reveals the tree, Jesus now turns our attention to the most common fruit we produce every single day—our words.

II. Words as Fruit: Speech Reveals the Heart (v. 45a)

Jesus now takes the image of fruit and presses it into the most ordinary—and revealing—part of our lives.

“For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

Speech is not accidental; it is diagnostic.

Jesus does not say, “The mouth slips.”

He does not say, “The mouth betrays us once in a while.”

He says, “The mouth speaks what fills the heart.”

Our words are not exceptions. They are overflow.

Which means what comes out of us—especially under pressure—reveals what is stored within us. When we are squeezed, what spills out tells the truth about what we’ve been carrying all along.

And that’s why Jesus places such weight on speech.

Our words expose our inner formation.

When we are stressed—what comes out?

When we are offended—what comes out?

When we are afraid—what comes out?

Those moments are not anomalies; they are windows. They show us what has been quietly growing beneath the surface.

Sarcasm does not appear out of nowhere.

Bitterness does not arrive overnight.

Contempt does not suddenly take over.

And neither does grace.

These things grow slowly, over time, shaped by what we love, what we fear, what we rehearse in our minds, and what we allow to settle into our hearts.

This is where Jesus offers a gentle but necessary warning.

We often want God to fix our language without addressing our loves. We ask Him to clean up our speech while leaving our hearts untouched. But Jesus refuses to treat the symptom while ignoring the root.

He insists that the root matters more than the symptom.

Because the goal of the kingdom is not nicer-sounding people—it is transformed people. People whose hearts are being renewed, so that different fruit begins to grow.

And this is not said to shame us. It is said to help us see where the real work of the kingdom is taking place. Jesus exposes the heart because He intends to heal it.

III. Inner Formation Over Outward Conformity (v. 45b)

And this is where Jesus takes us beneath our words and into the deepest place of formation.

“The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of the evil treasure produces evil.”

Notice how carefully Jesus speaks here. He uses the language of good and evil three times each. Not casually. Not accidentally. He is drawing a sharp but honest contrast.

Jesus is not talking about isolated moments. He’s talking about *sources*. About what is stored. About what fills the heart and quietly shapes a life.

The heart, Jesus says, is the source of kingdom life.

And He describes it in the language of treasure.

Treasure is what we store.

Treasure is what we value.

Treasure is what we return to again and again.

Which means the kingdom reshapes what we treasure *before* it reshapes what we practice. Behavior flows from desire. Action flows from affection. Fruit flows from whatever we have decided is worth holding onto.

This is why outward conformity eventually fails.

Rule-keeping without renewal may look impressive for a while, but it cannot last. It leads to hypocrisy—because we learn how to appear righteous without being transformed. It leads to burnout—because we are carrying a weight we were never meant to bear alone. And it leads to judgmentalism—because when formation is shallow, comparison becomes our substitute for growth.

You can imitate fruit for a season. You can say the right things, avoid the wrong things, and manage appearances. But you cannot fake formation forever. Eventually, what is stored in the heart will show itself.

And Luke's Gospel has been pressing this point from the beginning.

Jesus is not forming religious performers. He is restoring human beings to their original calling—to live as people shaped by the life and love of God. This is not about producing a cleaner version of the old self. It is about becoming new.

And that kind of formation does not happen overnight.

The Spirit's work is slow and faithful. Growth is often invisible long before it becomes visible. Roots deepen before fruit appears.

The Spirit cultivates the soil of the heart through ordinary, unglamorous means—Scripture that shapes our imagination, prayer that reorders our loves, community that refines us, and repentance that keeps our hearts soft and open.

This is where the good news settles in.

Jesus is not asking us to try harder. He is inviting us to be renewed deeper. He is not demanding better fruit through sheer effort. He is offering a transformed heart through the life of the kingdom.

Because when the heart is renewed, the fruit will follow.

IV. Living the Text: Examining Our Fruit

So Jesus leaves us with a question—not one meant to accuse us, but one meant to help us tell the truth.

If trees are known by their fruit, then it's worth asking: *What fruit is consistently showing up in my life?*

What do my words—especially my unguarded words—reveal about what fills my heart? What do they reveal about what I treasure, what I return to, what I'm storing up beneath the surface?

And maybe most importantly: *Where might God be inviting deeper heart work—not just better behavior, but deeper renewal?*

This text is not meant to shame us. Jesus is not standing over us with a clipboard, tallying our failures. He is speaking like a skilled gardener—one who knows that real change doesn't happen by yelling at the branches, but by tending the roots.

Jesus exposes the heart because He intends to restore it.

And that's where we need to hear this clearly: **the same King who names the problem also provides the power for transformation.**

Which brings us back to those blackberry bushes.

They were never neat. Never tame. Always thorny. You didn't walk away from them untouched. And yet—some of the sweetest fruit came from those wild, thorn-covered branches.

That matters, because some of us believe we have to become polished before we can become fruitful. That if we could just sand down the rough edges, clean up the thorny places, then God could finally use us.

But Jesus never says that.

The presence of thorns does not disqualify fruitfulness.

Our lives may still have sharp places. Weaknesses. Struggles we wish weren't there. We may never be "tame plants." But that does not excuse fruitlessness—and it does not prevent grace.

Because God Himself is not tame or safe. But He is good.

And it is His goodness that creates goodness in us. It is His life in us that reshapes our hearts, reorders our treasures, and slowly—faithfully—produces fruit we could never manufacture on our own.

So the invitation of the kingdom is not, *Try harder.*

It is, *Come closer.*

Not, *Fix yourself.*

But, *Be renewed.*

Trees produce fruit according to their nature.

Words reveal what fills the heart.

And the kingdom works from the inside out.

The kingdom of God does not begin with behavior change, but with heart renewal.

And when the heart is renewed by the King—thorny, imperfect, unfinished as we may be—the fruit of the kingdom will inevitably follow.